DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 144 488 HE 009 276

AUTHOR Giles, Geoffrey J.
TITLE University Government in Nazi Germany: The Example of Hamburg. Yale Higher Education Program Working Paper.
INSTITUTION Yale Univ., New Haven, Conn. Inst. for Social and Policy Studies.
SPONS AGENCY Lilly Endowment, Inc., Indianapolis, Ind.
REPORT NO YHEP-15
PUB DATE Dec 76
NOTE 40p.
AVAILABLE FROM Program of Comparative and Historical Studies of Higher Education, Institution for Social and Policy Studies, Yale University, 1732 Yale Station, New Haven, Conn. 06520

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$2.06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Educational History; *Foreign Countries; Governance; Government Role; *Higher Education; *Political Power; *Post Secondary Education As a Field of Study; State Universities; *University Administration; World History
IDENTIFIERS Germany; *Nazi Germany; Third Reich; *University of Hamburg (West Germany)

ABSTRACT

Many apologies have been made for the part the German universities played in the Third Reich. The general stigma of having failed the people as intellectual leaders clung to the German academics for a long time. Their contention of helplessness before the forces of National Socialism gave rise to fears of similar weakness in the future. Although Hamburg is not altogether typical of the German universities at the time, a study of it as an example has some validity. Some important general and particular intra-state configurations of power between 1933 and 1945 can be demonstrated, and it can be seen that the professors were able to prevent much outside intrusion by the creation of new institutional forms through which they appeared to conform to the demands of the time but which they cleverly used to shift influence back to themselves. Of absolutely central importance were personalities who through their varying political abilities controlled the ups and downs of their institution. (Author/MSE)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

UNIVERSITY GOVERNMENT IN NAZI GERMANY: THE EXAMPLE OF HAMBURG

by

Geoffrey J. Giles*

YALE HIGHER EDUCATION PROGRAM
WORKING PAPER

YHEP-15

December 1976

*Geoffrey J. Giles
Research Associate, Program
of Comparative and Historical
Studies of Higher Education

The research reported in this paper has been part of the Yale Higher Education Program. It has been supported by research funds from the Lilly Endowment for the comparative study of academic organization and governance.

In the interest of fullest possible circulation of information and ideas, the Institution for Social and Policy Studies reproduces and distributes these Working Papers at the request of authors who are affiliated with the ISPS. They are not edited or reviewed, and the views in them are those of their authors.

Content of this Working Paper is not for publication or for quotation without permission. A list of the Working Papers of the Program may be obtained from the address below.

Program of Comparative and Historical
Studies of Higher Education
Institution for Social and Policy Studies
Yale University
1732 Yale Station
New Haven, Connecticut 06520

UNIVERSITY GOVERNMENT IN NAZI GERMANY:
THE EXAMPLE OF HAMBURG

Many apologies have been written for the part which German universities played in the Third Reich. A general stigma of having failed the German people as intellectual leaders clung to German academics for a long time. Their admission (or contention) of helplessness before the forces of National Socialism gave rise to fears of similar weakness in the future.[1] It was asserted, however, by most apologists that the German universities had not been irreparably destroyed or set back by the Nazi experience, in that professors had not always failed to hold their own against incursions. A general study of the office of rector during the period speaks of the "twilight of collaboration and opposition", the balance of which held the university on an albeit altered, yet not reversed course.[2] A detailed examination of university government at a single institution during the Third Reich has never been undertaken, partly due to a lack of archival sources, partly, one suspects, for fear of embarassment.[3]

It cannot be claimed that the following study is absolutely typical. Much was always made of the fact that Hamburg was a strongly Social-Democratic city. This in itself is often presented as proof of resistance to National

---

[1] For an examination of the apologists, see Wolfgang Fritz Haug, Der hilflose Antifaschismus, Zur Kritik der Vorlesungsreihen über Wissenschaft und NS an deutschen Universitäten, Frankfurt/M., 1967.

[2] Hellmut Seier, "Der Rektor als Führer, Zur Hochschulpolitik des Reichserziehungsministeriums 1934-1945," Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte, 12. Jahrgang, 2. Heft, April 1964, p. 146.

[3] Essays in university Festschriften are invariably written pro domo and cannot be described as objective accounts. Similarly, an "anti-Festschrift" such as Das permanente Kolonialinstitut, 50 Jahre Hamburger Universität (hrsg. vom AstA Hamburg), Hamburg 1969, brought out to counter the official university publication, goes right to the opposite extreme, painting everything black.

Socialism. In the university, however, there is little evidence of a left-wing bias; like most university professors, the tendency was to the right of the centre.[4] Three factors do make Hamburg atypical: firstly, it was a city-state, and thus had its own government and (until May 1934) education ministry on the spot. Ties between the university and the state administration were thus much closer and more collegial than was often the case in other federal states where the university was geographically far removed from the seat of government. Furthermore, Hamburg University did not have to compete with other universities for resources within the city-state, and so there evolved much more than elsewhere an atmosphere of working together with the state administration.[5] Secondly, Hamburg is unusual in having an exceptionally strong and forceful personality on the scene in the form of Prof. Adolf Rein, who rose to national prominence early in 1933 with his ideas on university reform. Thirdly, the city had, long before the Nazis appeared, been an important centre for colonial studies, which thus lent it a special importance within Germany as a whole.

Many facets which this study does exhibit may nonetheless be said to have wider validity. It will demonstrate both general and particular intra-state configurations of power which arose between 1933 and 1945. It will be seen that the professors were able to prevent much outside intrusion by the creation of new institutional forms, through which they appeared to conform to the demands of the times, but cleverly used to shift influence back to themselves.

---

[4] Friedrich Meinecke reports an old saw of the period regarding university teachers: "One can be with the People's Party up to the level of the secondary teacher; but above that one may be and can be only German National." Quoted in Fritz Ringer, The Decline of the German Mandarins, The German Academic Community 1890-1933, Cambridge, Mass., 1969, p. 218.

[5] However, there was also only a single university in Saxony, Württemberg, Thuringia, Hessen, and Mecklenburg.

The weakness of the university lay in confrontation with the law of the land, its strength in the interpretation of decrees (which were often vague, muddled or mutually contradictory), and the judicial power the rector possessed as leader (Führer) of the university to interpret them. But any institution is a collection of people, and the following study will show the absolutely central importance of personalities, who, through their varying political abilities, controlled the ups and downs of their institution.

The University of Hamburg was not founded until 1919, and, in the heady excitement of those early republican days, gained an unusually liberal-democratic constitution. Instead of being directly subordinate to a minister of state, a buffer committee was inserted between the city senate and the university to which the formal powers of control devolved.[6] This was known as the University Authority (Hochschulbehörde), and comprised sixteen members, including not only deputies of the upper and lower houses of the Hamburg government, but also the rector of the university himself (plus one other professor) and representatives of various educational bodies in the city.[7] One of the two representatives of the city senate in the Authority assumed the role of president (Präses). To him there was assigned an executive officer (with the civil service rank of Regierungsdirektor) for the purpose of liaison with the university, who indeed kept his office there rather than in the city administration buildings, and was treated with collegiality rather than suspicion.

Within the university itself, government rested with the senate (Senat)

---

[6] On the more usual form of organisation, see Arnold Köttgen, Deutsches Universitätsrecht, Tübingen 1933, p. 172 ff.

[7] Hochschulgesetz vom 4. Februar 1921, Para. 2 (Hamburgisches Gesetz- und Verordnungsblatt Nr. 17, 6 February 1921).

and the faculty councils (engere Fakultäten). The faculties held responsibility for curricular matters, for the granting of doctorates, and for the hiring of lecturers (Privatdozenten). It was, moreover, the faculty which submitted three recommendations (in order of preference) to the University Authority on the occasion of vacancies in professorships. After consideration and selection by the Authority, it was then the City Senate which formally appointed professors. Each of the four faculty councils consisted of all the full professors, plus one or two representatives of other academic ranks (nichtbeamtete ausserordentliche Professoren and Privatdozenten). They elected as their chairman the dean (Dekan), from among the full professors, who served a one-year term concurrently with the rector.[8]

Like the dean in his faculty council, the rector as head of the university senate was until 1933 primus inter pares. Although he was the highest officer of the university, and acted as its external representative, he did not possess wide powers of decision making. It was the senate which collectively governed the affairs of the university. It consisted of the rector, his predecessor (the prorector), the deans, representatives of the faculties and lower-ranking professors and lecturers, making a committee of thirteen in all. Affairs which were not strictly academic (e.g. disciplinary matters) or which affected the university as a whole were discussed here. Furthermore, it was informed of faculty council recommendations regarding appointments, which it generally forwarded with its endorsement to the University Authority. The rector was not elected from or by the senate alone, but by the faculty councils and senate in tandem (acting as the so-called Vollversammlung) from

---

[8] Ibidem, paras. 14-23.

among the full professors to serve for one year.[9]

Thus while power in the university did reside overwhelmingly with a professorial oligarchy, there existed a machinery of checks and balances which spread over various committee groupings of people. All this was to be cut through by the Nazis, who reacted to bureaucratic tardiness with violent demonstrations. It should be pointed out that there was available a ready means of airing student grievances in the staff-student committees which the university statutes required each faculty to set up.[10] However, the Nazi students had a firm hatred of the measured pace of parliamentary procedures (the very Weimar "system", in its aversion to more direct authoritarianism, being blamed for the failures of the Republic), and wanted immediate and visible results to justify their fervent revolutionary stance.

Violence had not been uncommon on the campus since the National Socialist Students' Association (Nationalsozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund - NSDStB) gained control of the students' representative council in 1931.[11] This had, at Hamburg at least, not been directed toward faculty members, but largely at other students, in particular the socialist and communist groups. Even before 1933, the rector and university senate had taken no firm action to halt this, beyond repeated verbal reprimands, although they had, for example, the constitutional means to dissolve constantly offensive student groups.[12] It is apparent that fear of NSDStB retaliation played a part in

---

[9] Ibid., paras. 26-29.

[10] Ibid., para. 20.

[11] Geoffrey Giles, The National Socialist Students' Association in Hamburg 1926-1945, Ph.D. thesis, University of Cambridge 1975, p. 65 ff.

[12] Disziplinarordnung für die Hamburgische Universität (February 1925), paras. 9 & 31, Hamburg University archives (UniHH) Di.W.2.

this.[13] But the clear unwillingness of any organ of the university to intervene in the face of inexcusable violence must have encouraged the Nazi student leaders to feel that here was the speediest and most effective means of achieving their goals.

Hitler's appointment to the German chancellorship on 30 January 1933 did not cause undue disquiet in the university as a whole. The NSDStB was, of course, exuberant, and brutally attacked Jewish students almost daily in front of the university.[14] Things got so out of hand at Kiel that the senate there closed the university for four days, but at Hamburg no official comment was passed on the political situation. Instead, the senate sat on 10 February arguing over such thorny problems as when to remove and replace academic caps during university ceremonial.[15] It was not until after the Reichstag elections of 5 March 1933 that there was an inkling that the Nazis would indeed be able to implement the radical changes they had long threatened. The very next day there was a disturbing hint of new policy in the University Authority with the dismissal of the popular assistant executive officer.[16] By the end of the month, the presiding (city) senator had been replaced by a National Socialist, Senator Ofterdinger.

The NSDStB leader at the university rushed to him with a series of demands, most of which Ofterdinger unhesitatingly translated into action.

---

[13] In Halle, for example, violent demonstrations had been followed by a mass exodus of almost all the students (who transferred to other universities), skillfully engineered by the NSDStB in order to incapacitate and even force the closure of the university. Giles, p. 97.

[14] Monatsbericht Studentenbund-Sturm, 1 March 1933, Archiv der ehem. Reichsstudentenführung und des NSDStB, Würzburg (RSFWÜ) V * 2 alpha 520.

[15] Protokoll der 207. Sitzung des Universitätssenats, 10 February 1933, UniHH C.20.4.

[16] "Regierungsrat Maass zum Abschied", Hamburger Tageblatt, 10 March 1933.

On 5 April he placed a ban on all "communist, Marxist (Social-Democratic), and pacifist organisations at the university", although it was, strictly speaking, the rector who recognised and derecognised student societies.[17] A major part of the NSDStB's propaganda had always been the call for the imposition of numerus clausus on university admissions, to be applied specifically to restrict the intake of Jewish students. This the leader of the Hamburg student body formally demanded of the rector and Senator Ofterdinger on 1 April 1933, the day of the nationwide Jewish boycott.[18] The whole question was resolved for the Nazi students by the Law Against the Overcrowding of German Schools and Universities of 25 April 1933,[19] but well before the promulgation of this national law, Ofterdinger took steps (on 6 April) to ensure immediate restrictions in Hamburg. Nor did demands end there:

> The student body also advanced the view that professorial appointments and Habilitationen of Jewish lecturers could no longer be considered. The president of the University Authority has agreed to this decision (my emphasis - G.J.G.). Finally the student body advanced the view that any appeals by Jewish students for financial aid must be rejected without consideration. To this decision, too, the president of University Authority agreed.[20]

Once the Nazi Party had appointed its own man to head the University Authority, this body no longer met for discussion, its chairman having usurped all powers for himself. The most disturbing development of all was that the senator was not bothering, before issuing sweeping decrees, to consult with the rector at all. This was most evident immediately after the promulgation of the Civil

---

17 Protokoll 209. Sitzung Universitätssenat, 5 May 1933, UniHH C.20.4.

18 Heinrichsdorff to Raape, 1 April 1933, UniHH N.20.1.

19 Gesetz gegen die Überfüllung der deutschen Schulen und Hochschulen, quoted in Joachim Haupt, Neuordnung im Schulwesen und Hochschulwesen, Berlin 1933, p. 17.

20 Protokoll 209. Sitzung Universitätssenat, 5 May 1933, UniHH C.20.4.

Service Law of 7 April 1933, which provided the legal basis for purges of Jewish and politically undesirable professors. It was the NSDStB leader whom Ofterdinger consulted to ask whom he should dismiss.[21] He was not even listening merely to the student leaders, rather his ears were receptive to calumnies of any student who wished to denounce a professor. The professor of anatomy was dismissed on the recommendation of students who feared his stiff examinations, claiming entirely falsely that the charges they brought against him had been endorsed by the NSDStB leader, who however categorically opposed the dismissal but only heard of it after the event.[22] At its meeting on 27 April 1933, the university senate heard the rector report that a number of professors had been instructed by the University Authority not to announce any lectures for the forthcoming summer semester. Several of its members stressed in the ensuing discussion that

> in the light of the present situation firm and concerted action is necessary. This action must be in the hands of the rector and senate.[23]

To this end the rector and the deans finally met with Senator Ofterdinger on 29 April to persuade him to try and curb the disruptive behaviour of individuals in classes, and to consult with the rector before taking measures under the Civil Service Law, requests which, however, the senate felt it necessary to ask the rector to repeat in two subsequent meetings.[24] The one

---

21 An example of a clearly pre-arranged "official" letter, together with a private gloss is given by Engelken to Ofterdinger, 11 & 12 April 1933, RSFWÜ V * 2 alpha 523.

22 Erklärung Heinrichsdorff, n.d., RSFWÜ V * 2 alpha 516.

23 Before amendment, this minute had originally read: "This action must remain, now as before, in the hands of the rector and senate." Protokoll 208. Sitzung Universitätssenat, 27 April 1933, UniHH C.20.4.

24 Aktennotiz Besprechung des Rektors und der Dekane mit dem Herrn Präses der Hochschulbehörde, 29 April 1933, UniHH A.1.6.

person among the academics whom the "University Senator" did consult with was the history professor, Adolf Rein. It is possible that Rein even had a hand in Ofterdinger's appointment as head of the University Authority; he certainly took steps backstage to ensure that his colleague, Professor Deuchler, one of the few professors to have joined the NSDAP before 1933, was not given the position (for which he was evidently in the running).[25] There were, however, more objective reasons why Ofterdinger should seek advice from Rein, for the latter had just risen to national prominence with his proposals for university reform. Rein's recently published book, "The Idea of the Political University", in which he advocated the politicisation of the university in the service of the state, was hailed by the Nazis as the answer to their sorry lack of policy on higher education.[26] The professoriate saw it as a means to make themselves acceptable to the National Socialists, and Rein was quickly co-opted onto the University Reform Commission of the German Rectors' Conference on 12 April 1933. For this reason, and because the Hamburg NSDStB accorded Rein "their quite special trust",[27] it was natural that Ofterdinger should consult extensively with him throughout April, though undiplomatic that he should entirely ignore the rector and senate. It was Ofterdinger who "considered it desirable for the continuation of (Rein's) advisory capacity" that he join the NSDAP.[28]

---

25 Denkschrift Anschütz ("Kurzer wissenschaftlicher Lebensgang") 28 August 1941, UniHH Personnel file Georg Anschütz.

26 Adolf Rein, Die Idee der politischen Universität, Hamburg 1933. Two other leading contributions to the debate on university reform at this time were Johann Wilhelm Mannhardt, Hochschulrevolution, Hamburg 1933, which proposed a complete separation of freshmen in a pre-university "Academy", where they would undergo a uniform general education with a political slant; and Hans Freyer, Das politische Semester, Jena 1933, which advocated that the university should continue the political education of the Labour Service in a series of special lectures mainly concerned with history, for the freshmen.

27 Heinrichsdorff to Brauer, 27 April 1933, UniHH A.170.8.15.

28 Supplement to Military Government of Germany Personnel Questionnaire Adolf Rein, 21 June 1945, Hochschulbehörde Hamburg (HB) personnel file Rein.

Rein, an ambitious man eager for both influence and office, thought it wise to comply and became a Party member on 1 May 1933.

Meanwhile, the Nazi students at Hamburg were scheming to push Rein into a position of greater influence. They would ideally have liked him as rector, but this was for the moment impossible, since he was not a full professor, only an Extraordinarius. At the last moment, they protested against the fact that the main speech at the university's May Day celebration, dealing with the university's response to the "national revolution", was to be given by the 67-year-old Professor Brauer, a member of the older generation who, they (no doubt rightly) claimed, could scarcely be expected to identify himself with the aspirations of the "youthful" Nazi Party. Under threats of student demonstrations, the rector conceded to their requests to replace Brauer with Rein (twenty years his junior).[29]

The May Day celebration served a second purpose. Ofterdinger was anxious to rid himself of his executive officer, Regierungsdirektor Professor von Wrochem, who had been attached to the University Authority since its inception. Von Wrochem had incurred the displeasure of the students by refusing permission to fly the swastika flag over the university immediately after the March Reichstag elections. He was warned by Ofterdinger not to attend the political rally which the May Day ceremony was intended to be. As a safety measure, the NSDStB made plans to kidnap him if he did make his way there.[30] Then on the following day, Ofterdinger swiftly dismissed him precisely because he had not attended, asserting that von Wrochem now lacked "the confidence of the

---

[29] Heinrichsdorff to Brauer, 27 April 1933; Denkschrift Rein "Niederschrift über den Anteil von Prof. Rein an den Vorbesprechungen zur Feier des 1. Mai in der Universität," UniHH A.170.8.15.

[30] Interview with Frau Heinrichsdorff (in 1933 Fräulein Frank, the students' union typist), 28 March 1953, Archiv der Forschungsstelle für die Geschichte des Nationalsozialismus in Hamburg, Box 3752.

majority of the faculty and of the entire student body."[31] The reactions of the rector and senate deserve close scrutiny here, for it was in response to this unmerited intrusion above all else that one would expect to see evidence of their "firm and concerted action". Assaults on communist students they could easily stomach, the dismissal of Jewish colleagues was regulated by the law of the land and thus transgressed the boundaries of their consciences, but Herr von Wrochem. . .? Here was one of their own, plucked from their very midst. He had seen the birth of the university, had worked for years to promote its best interests, had been made an honorary professor by them for his sterling service.

And yet what action did the senate consider appropriate to this disturbing turn of events? They planned a farewell dinner, and a collection for a gift![32] Only after this was a letter drafted to Senator Ofterdinger, pointing out the complete error of suggesting that the faculty did not have the utmost confidence in von Wrochem, and underlining the senate's view that isolated student action did not signify a general dissatisfaction on the part of the students either. And this was all. There was not the slightest suggestion that von Wrochem should be re-instated. The strongest protest at the transparent frame-up which the rector could muster ran lamely as follows:

> Furthermore we should not like to suppress our sorrow that it was not possible for Herr von Wrochem to participate in the university celebration of the First of May as a result of deeply regrettable incidents, which I shall not go into more closely.[33]

And why not?! It seems that the senate just could not believe that things were as bad as they were. In the rector's emotional and pathetic farewell letter

---

[31] Von Wrochem to Raape, 5 May 1933, UniHH B.2.

[32] Protokoll 209. Sitzung Universitätssenat, 5 May 1933, UniHH C.20.4.

[33] Raape to Ofterdinger, 6 May 1933, UniHH B.2.

to von Wrochem, he tried to console him with the words:

> But we must not lose heart, and we hope with you for a happy future for the university in the new age - indeed, especially now, for it is just this new era which together we have all been longing for.[34]

His naïve faith that all would turn out well had not been shaken. A month earlier, the rector had counselled the (Jewish) philosopher, Professor Ernst Cassirer, against his hasty (and wise) decision to leave Germany:

> I have often discussed the whole situation in general terms. . . with Herr von Wrochem, and we have both come to the conclusion that one must for the moment just wait and see. Things are still in a state of flux, and one doesn't know what they will be like, say, ten days from now.... For the step which you anticipate and which will under certain circumstances be appropriate, there will still be plenty of time.[35]

But there was not time, and the professors for the most part failed to realise the change of pace with which the "Nazi revolution" strode forward until their institutional rights had been trampled. Yet even then they confined their protests to each other. The Hamburg Philosophical Faculty council, after a long discussion on the Jewish dismissals, finally determined to express privately in writing to the colleagues affected its members' "personal sorrow over their fate", and passed the motion: "The faculty council regrets this intervention in the teaching body." Only one professor's conscience was not salved by this simple entry in the minutes book, and he rejected the motion as a meaningless gesture:

> It was expressly emphasised in the faculty council that the motion was not meant to be used vis-à-vis the (University) Authority, or otherwise in public. It was added that not even a private communication of this decision might follow, since it was subject to the confidentiality of faculty council proceedings. It follows from this

---

[34] Raape to von Wrochem, 10 May 1933, ibid.

[35] Raape to Cassirer, 8 April 1933, UniHH A.1.6.

> that no use whatever is intended for the motion formulated by the faculty council. I have to say that I cannot see any point in motions which have no purpose.[36]

It is true that in Hamburg, as all over Germany, unpleasant and frequently violent demonstrations against individual professors were occurring; it is true that professors were suffering police raids on their homes in connection with denunciations;[37] it is true that they were civil servants and depended directly upon the state (via the University Authority) for their livelihood. There were plenty of reasons for them to tread cautiously in the early months of 1933 for fear of retaliation. But why they stood by so passively and ineffectually in the face of that which had always been most repugnant to them, namely external and politically-motivated intrusions, is difficult to explain fully.

The ultimate power which had always theoretically resided in the University Authority, as in a board of trustees, was now usurped by its president for single-handed control in his role as political commissar. On 10 May 1933, Adolf Rein was appointed Advisor on University Reform to the University Authority. Three weeks later the Authority as a committee officially disappeared, and became a mere department of the Hamburg Education Authority.[38] By 20 June 1933, Rein was made the executive officer of the University Authority, filling the vacancy left by von Wrochem, though he was acting as such from the beginning of the month. At that time, the hatchet man, Ofterdinger, had been transferred to the Public Health Authority, leaving Rein

---

[36] Protokoll Sitzung der Philosophischen Fakultät, 29 April 1933; Lauffer to Küchler, 5 May 1933, UniHH Philosophical Faculty files.

[37] Giles, p. 111.

[38] Gesetz, betreffend Aufhebung der Hochschulbehörde vom 31. Mai 1933, Hamburgisches Gesetz- und Verordnungsblatt Nr. 50, 31 May 1933. See also Fritz Steinmetz, Hamburgische Verwaltungsorganisation vom 5. März 1933 bis zum 30. Juli 1936, Diss. iur. Hamburg 1937, pp. 26 & 32.

the run of things to a great extent, for the new president had many other tasks to contend with as head of the entire Education Authority.

Now that informed policy and personnel decisions were in the hands of Adolf Rein, it was hoped by Nazis in Hamburg (particularly the students) that the "National Socialist university" would at last be realised.[39] However, the NSDStB quickly found that Rein did not respond favourably to all the urgent requests they put before him. Especially irksome to the students was his handling of the vacancy in the chair of anatomy. The Studentenbund was eager, in fact quite determined to have the post given to a Dr. Blotevogel, one of the few Nazis in the Medical Faculty, which they otherwise considered a solid "reactionary clique".[40] Yet Rein told the NSDStB openly the man was not academically qualified for a chair, and that he did not intend to make purely political appointments. Rein was extremely careful about appointments to full professorships, which put the candidate in possible line for the rectorship. And since all academic appointments were issued from his desk, he was indeed able to exercise a control in this matter. At about this time, Adolf Rein himself became a full professor.

The student leaders had turned all the more readily to Rein for support of their purges, because they remained disillusioned with the university senate. The "Nazi revolution" left it virtually untouched. On 5 May 1933 the rector proposed a block resignation to the senate, as had occurred at Prussian universities, in order to clear the way for fresh elections.

---

[39] It is clear that at this time the Hochschulreferent did have considerable influence over personnel matters. This was necessary in a time of transition, but the Reich Education Ministry later considered it undesirable for the administrative head to have any share of the rector's responsibility for personnel decisions. Hans Huber, Der Aufbau des deutschen Hochschulwesens, Berlin 1939, p. 20 f.

[40] Minnich to Stäbel, 21 December 1933, RSFWU V * 2 alpha 516.

The "overwhelming majority" of its members, however, disagreed with him that such a step was either desirable or necessary.[41] The rector himself, the law professor, Leo Raape, whose one-year term was not due to expire until 1 October 1933, did offer his own resignation to Ofterdinger, insisting that he would not join the NSDAP. The latter, however, asked him to remain in office for the present, "evidently because a suitable successor who belonged to the Party was not at hand."[42] Yet Raape wished to go, and set about searching with the senate for a successor. They agreed upon the medical professor, Rudolf Degkwitz, who was new to Hamburg in the Winter Semester 1932/33, but had attractive National Socialist credentials. Although no longer an actual Party member, he had belonged to the NSDAP before it was banned in 1923, and had participated in the famous march to the Feldherrnhalle in Munich on 9 November 1923. What had brought him to the attention of the university community at large, however, was what Raape described as a "manly declaration against presumptuous students."[43] Degkwitz had objected to the student leader's insulting remarks about the professoriate at the May Day celebration. Unlike the rest of the faculty, he made a public statement to the students in his class the following day, vehemently protesting against being marked down as a second-class patriot.[44] Degkwitz was altogether an outspoken person, and, having accepted the nomination for the rectorship, was then denounced by a junior assistant for supposedly derogatory political remarks, and suspended from his professorship until after the end of the semester, by which time,

---

41 Protokoll 209. Sitzung Universitätssenat, 5 May 1933, UniHH C.20.4.

42 Erklärung Raape, n.d. (1945), HB personnel file Leo Raape.

43 Ibid.

44 Transcript of Degkwitz's remarks in UniHH A.1.6.

however, it became necessary to find and appoint another candidate.[45] It is entirely possible that the suspension was merely a ploy by Rein to prevent the forceful character that Degkwitz was from gaining the rectorship. There was no personal vindictiveness here. Rein simply believed in strongly authoritarian government as the most efficient way of getting things done, and he did not want as executor in the university of his own widely-acclaimed plans for politicisation a man who might hesitate and question his instructions too much. On 5 July 1933, the university senate appointed the law professor, Eberhard Schmidt, who had been working well with Rein on a drafting committee for the reform of the university, to head the commission charged with the implementation of Rein's plan. Soon afterwards, Schmidt took over the rectorate also.

The one concrete scheme to emerge from Rein's otherwise somewhat confused book was for an interdisciplinary group, which he proposed to call the Political Faculties Group (Politische Fachgemeinschaft der Fakultäten - PFG), which would hold lectures and classes of definite political relevance.[46] In order to emphasise its importance in the university, the PFG was granted quasi-faculty status. It was governed by a kind of faculty council of twelve professors, whose leader was even referred to as the dean and had an appropriate chain of office. The NSDStB was almost obliged to welcome the courses offered by the Group, since it was itself in such bureaucratic disarray at this time that ideological training had been neglected.[47] The professors,

---

[45] Claasen to Degkwitz, 20 June 1933; Aktennotiz Rein 19 June 1933, HB personnel file Rudolf Degkwitz.

[46] Rein, Idee der politischen Universität, p. 36 ff.

[47] The student leaders admitted that "in the NSDStB a regular and systematic (political) education has not yet been achieved." Protokoll Sitzung des Politischen Kollegs, 15 December 1933, UniHH C.51.1.

for their part, were eager to "co-operate in the political education of the students", or rather saw a good opportunity to exercise a steadying influence here.[48] They became increasingly more sympathetic towards Rein as they saw him resisting the demands of the students. For example, he refused to yield to a student request for membership of the "faculty council" of the PFG, in order to leave control of it completely in professorial hands. But this he did with diplomacy, by apparently welcoming student participation and then creating a separate body, the Politische Colleg, to coordinate ideological training.[49] Thus the students were given a voice in these affairs, but no share in effective control. When student leaders pressed for representation on the university senate, as had been conceded at all Prussian universities, Rein repulsed this intrusion with arguments that at Hamburg's "political university", the Politische Colleg was now much more important than the Senate.[50]

The constitutional structure of the university was altered to bring it in line with the changed situation and Rein's plan in a new University Law, issued by the Hamburg Gauleiter & Reichsstatthalter,* Karl Kaufmann, on behalf of the city senate on 19 January 1934. University government was now switched formally to the "leader-principle", which concept had been introduced to Prussian universities by a ministerial decree of 28 October 1933.[51] The Education Authority alone (i.e. its University department) was to be responsible for the appointment of the rector. The university senate was

*The head of the political and civic authorities.

48 Bericht über die Bildung der "politischen Fachgemeinschaft", n.d., UniHH C.51.

49 Protokoll Sitzung PFG, 3 & 13 November 1933, UniHH C.51.1.

50 Rein to Reichs-SA-Hochschulamt, 3 January 1934, Staatsarchiv Hamburg (StA) Uo 3.

51 Erlass Rust, "Vorläufige Massnahmen zur Vereinfachung der Hochschulverwaltung", 28 October 1933, Zentralblatt für die gesamte Unterrichtsverwaltung in Preussen, 75. Jahrgang 1933, p. 291.

permitted to suggest three candidates, all of whom, however, might be ignored. The term of office of the rector continued to be one year, with the possibility of unrestricted renewal, though he might be dismissed at any time whatever. He was entitled to attend all faculty council meetings.[52]

The university senate ceased to be a governing body in any sense and became instead a purely advisory council which the rector might summon from time to time. Two representatives of the PFG were added to its membership, and also two students, though these latter were only to attend when invited, to discuss only those matters directly pertaining to student affairs. In practice, the composition was only important in the interim period before Rein's own rectorship, during which time he was able to use his influence to place certain of his supporters and protégés on the senate, people whom he had either brought to Hamburg or raised to full professorial status.[53]

Following the leader-principle still, the deans of the faculties were now appointed by the rector, not elected by their faculty councils. The same provision of re-election and recall applied as for the rector. The make-up of the faculty councils remained substantially the same, except that two student representatives could participate, as in the senate, when invited. In practice, both here and on the senate, student members were generally only admitted to discuss specific points on the agenda, after which they were obliged to leave the meeting. Moreover, it was not until 1939 that students were asked to attend meetings at all. The faculty councils continued to have "the right and the duty" to put forward recommendations to the Education

---

[52] Gesetz über die Neuordnung der Universität vom 19. Januar 1934, paras. 5-9. Hamburgisches Gesetz- und Verordnungsblatt Nr. 5, 21 January 1934.

[53] Ibid., paras. 10-11.

Authority for appointments to vacant chairs. As had always been the case, the Authority was not obliged to follow their advice, but did have to seek a council's comment on any counter-suggestion of its own. It was explicitly stated that recommendations for appointments were not to be made solely by the dean: rather this was to continue to be a matter decided, in deviation from the leader-principle, "in a collegial manner by the faculty council without the participation of the student body."[54] The insertion of this clause betrays Rein's hand, in his constant concern to uphold academic standards against possible incursions of political arbitrariness. There were of course political appointments. Two of Rein's fellow historians, Professors Westphal and Schüz, received chairs at Hamburg in the autumn of 1933, as did the economist Professor Karl August Fischer, and were swiftly and deftly manoeuvred by Rein into seats on the university senate. They were generally considered to be virtually the most radical National Socialists on campus (in an idealistic sense), but their academic credentials never gave cause for doubt. Their influence, however, lasted for a relatively short time, before homosexual activities caused all three to resign and leave Hamburg.[55]

The Political Faculties Group was anchored in the new University Law as a permanent feature of the university, with its tasks defined as follows:

1) to provide for the political training of the students, in co-operation with the student leadership;

2) to further the academic co-operation of the faculties with each other; and

---

[54] Ibid., paras. 12-19, here para. 18.

[55] The evidence suggests that these were not politically-motivated dismissals, neither were the charges concocted. However, it is not the task of this paper to explore the psychohistorical implications of the coincidence that the three leading Nazis were, entirely independently of each other, involved in activities of this nature.

3) to promote the cultivation of foreign studies, in particular of overseas and colonial studies.[56]

These represented the particular concerns of Adolf Rein, though by the summer of 1934, he was so disillusioned with the student leadership that co-operation on the first point dwindled. Rein had appointed Andreas Feickert, the able national leader of the students' Labour Service and a former Hamburg Nazi student leader, to an ad hominem post as Secretary of the PFG. It transpired, however, that the Hamburg student leader Wolf Müller and Feickert were bitter enemies "to a degree which I (Rein) did not believe possible for young National Socialists to be."[57] The prolonged quarreling gave Rein a low opinion of the Hamburg NSDStB leaders and wore away his concern to involve them in planning discussions for the PFG. Colonial studies later fell under the domain of the revived Colonial Institute of the university, and the activities of the PFG became restricted to a series of seminars, involving about a dozen professors. The "political university" became an empty slogan.

University government was considerably complicated by the creation of a Reich Education Ministry (REM) on 1 May 1934. While the Land education authorities and ministries remained largely responsible for the financing of education, most administrative decisions, including the hiring and firing of personnel, were now usurped by the REM in Berlin.[58] Intended to simplify by

---

[56] Gesetz Neuordnung Universität vom 19. Januar 1934, para. 20.

[57] Rein to von Allwörden, 8 February 1936, HB personnel file Adolf Rein.

[58] On the administration and work of the REM, see Otto Graf zu Rantzau, Das Reichsministerium für Wissenschaft, Erziehung und Volksbildung, Berlin 1939; also Theodor Vahlen, "Wissenschaft, Erziehung und Volksbildung im nationalsozialistischen Staate", in Grundlagen, Aufbau und Wirtschaftsordnung des nationalsozialistischen Staates, hrsg. von Heinrich Lammers und Hans Pfundtner, Erster Band, Gruppe 2, Nr. 21, Berlin n.d. (1937?).

centralisation, the birth of the new ministry in fact considerably lengthened bureaucratic procedures by adding to them yet another limb (viz. Land to Reich), and one which was infinitely less capable of assessing many questions than the local Land authorities. However, because of this very fact, a close relationship between Hamburg University and the Education Authority became all the more necessary. This did already exist, as the "University Senator", Karl Witt (Ofterdinger's successor) and his executive officer, Rein, won the full confidence and trust of the professoriate during the final months of 1933. The amicable relationship meant that university and Education Authority were able to go forward together as a common suppliant for REM approval of their petitions. It must be stressed again that this situation was not quite typical, and was encouraged by the fact that Hamburg had only one mouth to feed.

Among the recently-acquired privileges of the Hamburg Education Authority which now fell to the Reich were almost all appointments, including those of rector and deans. The rector became responsible directly and solely to the Reich Education Minister, Bernhard Rust.[59] This did not mean, however, that the Land education authorities were left out of the picture entirely. Their recommendations on most matters were sought as well, alongside those of the rector and the leader of the National Socialist Lecturers' Association (Nationalsozialistischer Deutscher Dozentenbund - NSDDozB). And woe indeed to him who tried to negotiate directly with higher authorities behind the backs of the Land government! The Hamburg NSDDozB leader suffered a very sudden and hard fall from favour in 1938 when he was discovered doing just this.[60] To sum up: ultimate decisions were now taken in Berlin at the REM,

---

[59] Erlass Rust, "Richtlinien zur Vereinheitlichung der Hochschulverwaltung", 1 April 1935, Deutsche Wissenschaft, Erziehung und Volksbildung, 1. Jrg. 1935, p. 142.

[60] Protokoll Ochsenius Termin beim Gauleiter, 1 September 1939, RSFWU V * 2 alpha 549.

but the local organs (faculty council, rector, Education Authority) still did much toward preparing and shaping these decisions, even though it was not unknown for the REM on occasion to ignore recommendations and grasp the initiative itself.

Let us return, however, to the distribution of power at the local level, the constellation and breadth of which it is the task of this paper to explore. During 1934, the NSDStB leaders and Adolf Rein became somewhat estranged, and the former determined to manoeuvre into the rectorate a more dependable National Socialist, Prof. K. A. Fischer, as a counterforce. However, all their political manoeuvring came to naught when their candidate's sexual misdemeanours caused him to leave town rather quickly. The process for the election of the rector ran somewhat differently from the arrangement described in the 1934 Hamburg University Law. The Reich Minister, not the Hamburg Education Authority, appointed the rector now, so Rein was saved from the embarassment of having effectively to appoint himself rector. The university senate was permitted to submit three recommendations to the Minister, but voted unanimously to forward only that of Adolf Rein, who was duly appointed to serve from 1 October 1934 as rector of Hamburg University.[61]

Only a fortnight later, he became involved in a major clash with the Nazi stalwarts in his first senate meeting as rector. The discussion centred on exactly which professors should wear the limited number of academic gowns the university possessed for the rector's inauguration. Quite unexpectedly, Professor Mühlhausen declared that "he would appear in SA uniform or not at all." Rein insisted that academic dress should be worn on this academic occasion. He wished to maintain an appearance of corporate unity, and refused

---

[61] Protokoll 220. Sitzung Universitätssenat, 18 June 1934, UniHH C.20.4.

to allow any uniformed professors to join the processions of the senate entering and leaving the hall, or to sit with the senate on the podium.[62] The leaders of the then insignificant NSDDozB did their utmost in the next days to persuade everyone with a uniform to wear it, and then in a last-minute reversal, tried to effect a boycott of the ceremony altogether. In the event, however, all went smoothly, and just as Rein had originally planned it.[63] He scored a considerable political success by asserting himself in this way at the very beginning of his incumbency. Armed with the support of the Education Authority, the Ministry, the Gauleitung, and not least an assurance from the Hamburg SA chief that he would in the future ban the wearing of SA uniform on academic occasions, Rein dismissed his antagonists from the senate.[64] However, he resolved never to have to suffer such a senate meeting again, and only ever summoned one other (in 1937) during his whole four-year tenure. Meetings of the senate were replaced under Rein by conferences with the four deans of the faculties. The NSDDozB leader was not invited to these, nor dared even to request an invitation, until after Rein's resignation as rector, after which he attended as a matter of course.

The outcome of the "Gown or Brownshirt" dispute incensed the leaders of the Nazi organisations in the university. Yet their repeated harassment of Rein made little impression, for he had secured for himself the full backing of Gauleiter Kaufmann, whose realisation of the importance of the university for the city Rein had stimulated in the first place. Rein played the Nazi game with great political acumen, positively encouraging factionalism. Not

---

[62] Protokoll 221. Sitzung Universitätssenat, 15 October 1934, ibid.

[63] Bericht über die Vorgänge, betr. Talar- und Uniformfrage, beim Rektorwechsel am 5. November 1934 (Rein), 14 November 1934, UniHH C.10.13.

[64] Rein to Lohmann, 4 December 1934, ibid.; Rein to Gall, 6 December 1934, UniHH T.10.7.

only did he poison the Gauleiter's ear against the NSDStB for several years with reports of their juvenile bickering, but he promoted this very state of affairs.[65] For example, he granted (as rector) travel scholarships for a trip to the Balkans to an "unofficial" group of students who had, with Gestapo assistance, been drummed out of the NSDStB, at the same time refusing a similar grant to the NSDStB for its own Balkan trip. When the Studentenbund leaders discovered that the renegade group was actually staying at Rein's summer house on Sylt, they considered this downright provocative, and tried to set the Gestapo on Rein himself.[66]

During the summer of 1935, the NSDStB began to work for a replacement of Rein as rector from the ranks of the NSDDozB. This supposedly activist corps had only mustered a mere ten members from the entire faculty by this time, and its work "exhausted itself in the writing of reports on professors."[67] The students were nonetheless anxious to groom the NSDDozB leader, Dr. Mühlhausen, for the rectorate, yet came up against the old problem that he was not yet a full professor. They prevailed upon the national leader of the NSDDozB, "Bubi" Schultze, to make representations in the REM to rectify this situation. And indeed a directive from the ministry did reach Rein, ordering him to proceed with the appointment. Here, however, is an example of one of the ways in which it was possible to thwart the express directions of the ministry. Rein simply did not comply with the instructions to discuss the matter with Mühlhausen himself, and instead persuaded the Education Authority that a full professorship for someone who could only hope for a mere handful

---

65 Müller to Derichsweiler, 31 May 1935, RSFWU II * 108 alpha 52.

66 Engelbrecht to Gestapo, 4 July 1935, RSFWU V * 2 alpha 573.

67 Nöldge to Schultze, 3 August 1935, ibid.

of students (Mühlhausen's field was celtic studies) was just not financially viable for the Hamburg state. The appointment was not turned down, then, but simply put on ice "temporarily."[68]

Meanwhile, word had reached Rein's ears that his downfall had been openly plotted at a national conference of the NSDDozB and NSDStB in October 1935. He concluded (probably correctly) that an attractive offer of a chair at Königsberg was a veiled attempt to remove him from the Hamburg rectorate, and obstinately refused it, asking however for more open support from the city authorities.[69] At the same time, the Hamburg NSDStB leader, Helmut Nöldge, was preparing a lengthy memorandum for the then "University Senator", von Allwörden, on the evils of Rein's rectorship. He complained of the exclusion of students from all affairs of the PFG, which was merely being "used to allow those who wish to become lecturers at Hamburg to present papers." He criticised the Hamburg professors for teaching such anathema as the viewpoints that "Roman law is the basis of all legal understanding" (Prof. Raape) and that "the true origin of all culture lies in the Mediterranean" (Prof. Hashagen). On the other hand, Nöldge lamented, politically active and dependable lecturers were denied chairs "merely" because they had hardly published anything. He was also particularly vexed that in Hamburg decisions on financial aid were out of his hands and controlled by faculty committees, where political criteria were given low priority compared to academic considerations. To a request from Nöldge for a share in the decision-making on awards, Rein agreed warmly and promised to make the necessary arrangements at once, only to issue

---

[68] Nöldge to Schultze, 14 October 1935, ibid.

[69] While there were financial qualms about Mühlhausen's appointment, there was no hesitation in awarding Rein a handsome salary increase on his refusal of the Königsberg offer!

a directive behind Nöldge's back to the effect that existing procedures were not to be changed in the slightest.[70]

Nöldge's letter to the senator was never sent. The wind was taken out of his sails by the Education Authority. The city senate itself endorsed Senator von Allwörden's concern that "support from a definitive political source" must be given to Rein, in order to help the REM resist the constant cries for his dismissal.[71] A letter was despatched to the ministry, and the NSDDozB leader Mülhausen, was summoned to appear before the President of the Education Authority, Karl Witt, to receive the following declaration:

> Both the Senate, the Reichsstatthalter & Gauleiter Kaufmann and Senator von Allwörden support unanimously and unqualifiably the rector of the Hanseatic University, Professor Dr. Rein. They regard Prof. Rein as an excellent and reliable National Socialist, of selfless, upright and impeccable character.[72]

Mühlhausen was told roundly that "the intrigues emanating from Berlin or Munich" with a view to making him (Mühlhausen) rector would have to cease forthwith. Nöldge was also carpetted to listen to the statement, and could only report to NSDDozB headquarters:

> Now that the attempt to award a full professorship to (Honorary) Professor Mühlhausen has failed, we are unable to suggest anyone else from the Hamburg faculty for the post of rector.[73]

And so Adolf Rein succeeded in continuing as rector, courting the city authorities and snubbing whenever possible the members of the Nazi organisations at the university which challenged his leadership of it. Whilst Rein did nothing to encourage membership in the NSDDozB, as soon as the NSDAP

---

70 Nöldge's handwritten draft in RSFWÜ V * 2 alpha 546.

71 Auszug aus dem Protokolle des Senats, 12 February 1936, HB personnel file Rein.

72 Mühlhausen to Reichsamtsleitung NSDDozB, 24 February 1936, RSFWÜ V * 2 alpha 546.

73 Nöldge to Schultze, 7 March 1936, ibid.

began accepting new members again in 1937, he immediately forwarded the names of 160 university staff for consideration. This was a profession of faith for Gauleiter Kaufmann, under whose leadership the new members would come.[74] Though this does not reflect the situation in every Gau, in Hamburg it was the Gauleiter who definitely ruled the roost.[75] Secure in the knowledge of his backing, Rein was even able to repulse the intrusions of the Party's secret police, the Sicherheitsdienst, to whom he successfully refused access to the university's files by spreading a mire of bureaucratic pettifoggery in their path.[76]

Various decrees were issued by the REM, limiting rectorships to two or three years, but there was never any clear policy which was adhered to in practice. In the Spring of 1938, however, Adolf Rein became so engrossed in new tasks that he felt ill-disposed to continue to wear himself down with the constant petty opposition of the NSDStB and the NSDDozB. Faced with the opening of a college for foreign studies (Auslandshochschule) in Berlin and rumours of the closure of at least part of the Hamburg University, Rein persuaded Gauleiter Kaufmann to support a vast expansion programme.[77] Since 1936, Kaufmann had in any case become increasingly concerned with the strengthening of Hamburg's position as "Germany's gateway to the world", and was especially sympathetic to Rein's visions of, for example, capturing a

---

[74] Liste der Anträge auf Aufnahme in die NSDAP, StA Pa.4.1.

[75] His extra-constitutionality assisted him greatly in achieving this. Cf. Wilhelm Gleiss, Die Einwirkung der Gleichschaltungsgesetze auf das Hamburgische Verfassungsrecht und die Hamburgische Verfassungsreform, Diss. iur. Hamburg 1934, p. 37 f.

[76] Aktenvermerk Capelle, 8 August 1937, UniHH A.1.6.; and correspondence in UniHH 0.30.2.

[77] Aktennotiz über die Besprechungen in Berlin am 9. und 10. März 1937 (Rein), UniHH F.80.4.1.

proposed Diplomats' College from Berlin. Plans for a vast, new campus were included in the city's redevelopment scheme for the north bank of the Elbe, the architectural minutiae of which gained the wrapt attention of Hitler himself.

Turning his interest to the demanding task of resurrecting the old Colonial Institute (the predecessor of Hamburg University) as the basis for and centre of the expanded university, Rein set about looking for a successor as rector. His choice fell upon Professor Goerttler, whom he had been grooming for the rectorship almost as soon as he had fetched him to Hamburg in 1934 to fill the vacant anatomy chair.[78] The NSDDozB, on the other hand, was trying to extol the virtues of Prof. Knoll to the REM, although he was almost universally regarded as neither an inspiring political figure nor a competent academic.[79] The NSDStB wanted to see Dr. Irmscher himself, the NSDDozB leader, as rector, of whom, however, they soon had to admit:

> Irmscher does not have the initiative to hold together the members of the Dozentenbund. As far as I can make out, he is leading an organisation which consists of a card-index and notepaper. Otherwise there would surely have been some sort of sign of the influence of a group of Nazi lecturers.... Irmscher is in the Gauleiter's bad books. This is caused by a reluctance to take responsibility in personnel decisions and by an ineptitude in negotiations. Irmscher displays no firm and clear concept in his activities, nor does he pursue any plans based on his own ideas. If pinned down, he tried to pass himself off as an innocent bystander.[80]

Despite these attempts to promote alternative candidates, it was officially Rein himself who was to nominate his successor. His excellent relations with the city government (he had recently been elevated to the title of Ratsherr by the Gauleiter) made it easy for him to persuade Kaufmann to endorse

---

[78] Ochsenius to Scheel, 11 June 1938, RSFWÜ V * 2 alpha 546.

[79] Nöldge to Kaufmann, 10 March 1938, ibid.

[80] Ochsenius to Kubach, 23 July 1938, RSFWÜ V * 2 alpha 573.

Goerttler vis-à-vis the REM.[81]

During the summer, however, Rein's opponents attempted to engineer a major incident which would discredit him. This arose in connection with Rein's decision to award the university's "Hanseatic Shakespeare Prize" to the British composer, Ralph Vaughan Williams. The announcement had been made in October 1937, but the presentation ceremony scheduled for June 1938. During May, the NSDDozB leader Irmscher began to spread rumors that Vaughan Williams was a communist, and the dean of the Philosophical Faculty, Professor Gundert, confronted Rein with these charges on 30 May 1938.[82] It did in fact transpire that the composer was named in the conference programme of a British society, the "Friends of Soviet Russia." The Sicherheitsdienst was informed, the NSDStB threatened a boycott, and the whole affair assumed embarassing proportions. A Foreign Ministry official came hurrying across from Berlin to try and prevent damage to Anglo-German relations, insisting that "the reputations of the Reich and of the city of Hamburg demand that the ceremony be held."[83] Although Rein succeeded yet again in getting his way, to the utter disgust of his opponents, the affair made them all the more determined to prevent Rein's nominated successor (and, they feared, puppet) from taking office. And in this instance, Rein did not prevail. The national headquarters of the NSDDozB and NSDStB made such powerful representations to the REM that the ministry felt unable to endorse Rein's candidate. On the other hand, Rein did manage to block the original counter-nominations. In the end, however, it was the Education Authority which had to try and effect a compromise, and it was one

---

81 Ochsenius to Scheel, 12 September 1938, RSFWU V * 2 alpha 546.

82 Niederschrift Dekansbesprechung, 30 May 1938, UniHH C.10.15.2.

83 Aktenvermerk Ochsenius, 7 June 1938, RSFWU V * 2 alpha 546.

which did not meet the approval of Rein. The new rector was Professor Wilhelm Gundert, one of the prime movers of the Vaughan Williams Affair. The Education Authority argued that, as professor of oriental studies, Gundert would be an appropriate head of the university as the shift of emphasis towards foreign studies took place. The normally punctilious Rein was so reluctant to see the university pass into these hands that he had to be reminded that it was his "duty to hand over the rectorate." This he did, yet flatly refused to serve as pro-rector.[84]

It is difficult to judge what the Education Authority really hoped for in Gundert. He was an enthusiastic Nazi, yet in general a naïve man, and not held in high esteem by his colleagues. Most probably it was hoped that Gundert would at least effect a reconciliation of the NSDDozB and NSDStB with the rectorate and city authorities. The former groups did indeed now meet with much more co-operation than before. Authority was still concentrated formally in the rector, but Gundert made greater use of his advisory bodies than Rein had done. The university senate began to meet again, and with the participation of student representatives (though still only for specific items on the agenda). Following a request of Gauleiter Kaufmann, Gundert actually permitted NSDStB involvement in the appointment of certain junior faculty members (Assistenten).[85] The NSDDozB leader was invited to the rector's conferences with the deans.[86] However, the change in the rectorate signified anything but an evaporation of the power and influence of Adolf Rein. He

---

[84] Protokoll der Sitzung am Dienstag d.1. November 1938 bei Staatssekretär Ahrens (Ochsenius), RSFWU V * 2 alpha 549.

[85] Protokoll 3. Sitzung Universitätssenat, 6 February 1939, UniHH C.20.4.

[86] Only, however, after the NSDDozB had lodged a complaint about his exclusion. Irmscher to Eisfeld, 8 October 1938, UniHH C.10.15.2.

retained a seat on the university senate as the new dean of the PFG, and, when he resigned this post in January 1940, was immediately co-opted again as head of the Colonial Institute. Thus he still remained to a large extent the "spiritual leader" of the university.[87] The planning programme for the expansion of the university lay squarely in his hands. It was Rein, not the rector, who conducted negotiations with the city authorities on the setting-up and financing of new chairs.[88] And on occasion, when the REM could not obtain satisfactory clarification of problems from Gundert, it was Rein who was summoned to Berlin to untangle the knots.[89] He remained something of an elder statesman, and an extremely active participant in the university senate, until the very end of the war.

In January 1941, Gundert announced his intention to step down and cast his eye about for a suitable replacement. He was persuaded, probably by the Education Authority, to nominate Professor Eduard Keeser, who had been appointed dean of the Medical Faculty in March 1934 (only three months after his arrival in Hamburg) and had served in this capacity for four-and-a-half years until dropped at the outset of Gundert's incumbency, during which time he had gained the respect of all his colleagues (except the die-hard Nazis). Keeser accepted the nomination, on condition that he was elected, and so the faculty councils were asked for their endorsement. There were no objections, though, as the Philosophical Faculty privately opined, they could hardly raise any, since they had no idea who Professor Keeser was.[90]

---

[87] This is exactly what was feared by the NSDDozB. Schultze to Hess, 21 June 1938, Berlin Document Center, Parteikorrespondenz file Adolf Rein.

[88] Protokoll 6. Sitzung Universitätssenat, 24 April 1939, UniHH C.20.4.

[89] Aktennotiz Gundert, 9 April 1940, UniHH C.10.16.

[90] The medical school lay at some distance from the main campus, and there was thus less contact between its professors and the other faculties. Protokoll Sitzung der Philosophischen Fakultät, 18 January 1941, UniHH Philosophical Faculty files.

Keeser began his rectorship with a firm stand against the NSDDozB, which he maintained for the whole of his term, extending to the end of the war. The Dozentenbund leader had in this instance tried to pressure Keeser into accepting Gundert as his prorector, and this he refused to do, preferring rather to leave the office vacant the whole time.[91] Both the senate meetings and the conferences with the deans were continued under Keeser, though in wartime conditions, much of the discussion dealt with faculty council recommendations for appointments to replace personnel, lost through death or drafting. This did not always entail an automatic rubber-stamp. When the Philosophical Faculty tried to bring about the creation of a new chair for the unpopular NSDDozB leader Anschütz, the university senate could not come up with concrete objections to stall their proposal, but ways were found to block the appointment elsewhere, namely in the Education Authority.[92] It was discovered that the testimonials for Anschütz had not been sought out by the faculty council independently, but provided by the candidate himself. Earlier reports on his academic ability were mysteriously missing from his personnel file.[93] When Anschütz was then found to be intriguing without justification against the university officer of the Education Authority, almost the whole university turned their backs on him and pressed for his dismissal. As a result of this, Gundert threatened to drag Keeser through a Party disciplinary court. The NSDStB, on the other hand, in a surprising reversal of roles, supported the rector and (mirabile dictu!) proposed Adolf Rein as the new NSDDozB leader.[94] This was not, however, given serious consideration in

---

[91] Denkschrift Keeser, n.d. (1945), HB personnel file Eduard Keeser.

[92] Protokoll 39. Sitzung Universitätssenat, 28 June 1944, UniHH C.20.4.

[93] Sieverts to Pyritz, 26 June 1951, HB personnel file Georg Anschütz.

[94] Formel to Kubach, 5 October 1944, RSFWU V * 2 alpha 573; Testimonial Wolff, 25 August 1945, UniHH personnel file Eduard Keeser.

NSDDozB headquarters, where Rein had always been considered persona non grata.

There were considerably more difficult tasks than keeping down the armchair activists of the NSDDozB. Apart from research priorities of importance to the war effort (Keeser, for example, was working on the toxic effects of chemicals on munitions workers), there was the constant threat of closure of the university as a teaching institution, or at least of individual faculties. The protests of the Education Authority that this was entirely unnecessary, as classes could be maintained even in the event of serious air raids, fell on deaf ears in the Education Ministry.[95] The Law Faculty was ordered to move with its students to Greifswald, the Philosophical Faculty to Göttingen. And here it was the faculty councils which succeeded in countermanding the directive. The lawyers obtained a signed statement from the mayor of Greifswald to the effect that the badly-damaged town could not possibly accommodate any newcomers.[96] The Philosophical Faculty, after similar assurances from Göttingen, arrived at a complex method of appearing to comply with the ministerial order: everyone would remain in Hamburg, but a courier would carry a bundle of application forms to Göttingen to register the students officially at the university there. The Göttingen faculty would then delegate the Hamburg faculty to teach its courses and set its examinations at Hamburg, and at the end of the semester the students would receive a Göttingen certificate of study.[97] Bureaucratic contortions they were, but by this time not all that out of the ordinary. There is far less to comment upon in the wartime rectorates, because the general practices for the construction, execution or

---

[95] Schrewe to Mentzel, 24 October 1944, StA Uo 8/4.

[96] Bescheinigung Oberbürgermeister Greifswald, 21 October 1944, ibid.

[97] Niederschrift über die Betreuung der von der Hansischen Universität Hamburg zur Philosophischen Fakultät der Universität Göttingen kommenden Studenten (Snell/Weber), 28 October 1944, ibid.

obstruction of policy were by now well tried and tested. Besides which, there was less concern now with displays of swimming with or against the current; it was more a matter of simply keeping heads above water.

And this must be seen as the main task which the professoriate set itself during the Third Reich: that of self-preservation. There was a prevailing sense of commitment to the maintenance of the institution. With steadily decreasing student enrolment (at least during peacetime),[98] there was the constant possibility of full or partial closure of many universities. The knowledge that the Nazi Party was generally contemptuous of academe only strengthened fears of this. Neither was there any comfort in the fact that Bernhard Rust was Education Minister throughout the period. This virtually guaranteed that the low priority given to education would not be revised. Rust invariably emerged as the loser in conflicts with Party organisations or other ministries, and the rectors knew it![99]

In the final analysis, this chapter in German university history must be viewed as a holding operation. Universities received many a set-back under the Nazis: German scholarhip sank to a low ebb after the Jewish expulsions;

---

[98] The number of university students decreased steadily from 92,512 in the Winter Semester 1932/33 to 40,645 in the Summer Semester 1939. Wartime figures were subject to rapid fluctuation, and furthermore experienced a massive increase in the number of female students. Statistisches Handbuch für Deutschland 1928-1944, hrsg. vom Länderrat des Amerikanischen Besatzungsgebiets, Munich 1949, p. 622.

[99] Rust's paralysing fits of depression are mentioned in Rolf Eilers, Die nationalsozialistische Schulpolitik, Eine Studie zur Funktion der Erziehung im totalitären Staat, Köln/Opladen 1963, p. 112 ff. A typical portrait of Rust is the account by former Gauleiter Albert Krebs in The Infancy of Nazism, The Memoirs of Ex-Gauleiter Albert Krebs 1923-1933, ed. William Sheridan Allen, New York 1976. The Minister shocked delegates at the 1943 German Rectors' Conference with his drunken professions of failure and powerlessness at a formal dinner. Kaltenbrunner to Bormann, 16 November 1943, Berlin Document Center, Parteikorrespondenz file Bernhard Rust.

the politicisation of the curriculum was distasteful for most, and with the lack of clear guidance from the political leadership, confusing for all; an air of anti-intellectualism led to a discouragement of school-leavers from matriculating at a university; and students sometimes became overly concerned with fulfilling the obligations imposed upon them by the NSDStB to the neglect of their studies.[100] It was in no sense a time of progress. Dahrendorf's description of National Socialism as the German social revolution does not apply to the German universities.[101]

The university did succeed in defending itself from many of the wilful or arbitrary attacks from Party quarters. There is, however, no implicit praise in this assessment (pace Manfred Weissbecker).[102] The Hamburg professors may have resented the intrusions of Party representatives, but they still did much to aid the ideological preparation for the Second World War with, for example, their overriding emphasis on colonial studies. On the other hand, there were instances of professors who afforded protection to part-Jewish students in their institutes.[103] One could easily draw up two long lists of the good and the bad sides of the Nazi university, in which moral cowardice and ideological indifference would be balanced by personal courage and political acumen. One could juggle with these lists to indicate either

---

100 This was, however, only general during the year after the Nazi seizure of power. Overall, the NSDStB had difficulty in inducing the students to take it seriously. Geoffrey Giles,"The Rise of the National Socialist Students' Association and the Failure of Political Education" in Peter D. Stachura, Adolf Hitler and National Socialism 1919-1945, London and New York, (1977, forthcoming).

101 Ralf Dahrendorf, Society and Democracy in Germany, New York 1967, p. 402 ff.

102 Manfred Weissbecker, Entteufelung der braunen Barbarei, Zu einigen neueren Tendenzen in der Geschichtsschreibung der BRD über Faschismus und faschistische Führer, East Berlin 1975 (here p. 62 f.) denounces those studies which point out the separation of state and Party as attempts to make all but the NSDAP itself appear harmless and blameless.

103 For example, Rector Keeser. Cf. Erklärung Hans Brender, June 1945, UniHH personnel file Eduard Keeser.

lamentable failure or hard-wrought success. But those who try respectively to do this are generally examining two different things and consulting only one of the lists. This paper has discussed university government, not moral responsibility. In its examination of the structure, organisation and administration of the university, however, light has been shed upon personal motives. It might appear in general terms that committees of men were striving to maintain the institution, whereas individuals had more selfish reasons for their actions and attitudes, though again the lines are not clearly drawn. The fortunes of individuals were, however, married to the welfare of the university, so that the stubborn stand to uphold academic standards, in the face of probable retaliation from the political leadership, shines to the undeniable credit of certain professors. That the professoriate for the most part shared common ideological ground with the Nazi Party in an aggressive nationalism shows neither susceptibility on the part of the former, nor persuasive skill on the part of the latter. It was merely an inheritance from the previous generation. The extent to which the Party leaders possessed enough insight to exploit this is the task of a forthcoming paper. In the realm of university government, however, there were a number of professors who struggled, in a manner more rash than circumspect, to make the best of a bad job and keep academic affairs as far as possible squarely in academic hands.

INSTITUTION FOR SOCIAL AND POLICY STUDIES

The mission of the Institution for Social and Policy Studies (ISPS) is to encourage and undertake multidisciplinary research and education. The ISPS is oriented to the exploration of social problems rather than to the refinement of discipline-based methodology. In recent years, ISPS research has focused on the problems of the city, education, health service delivery, and on the modeling of social systems. Currently, research is also being developed on criminal justice, governmental reform, environment, income distribution, aging, the policy-making process, and value problems in public policy. ISPS is not a consulting organization but an instrument for enriching the social sciences and related disciplines in the University.

Institution for Social and Policy Studies
16A Yale Station (111 Prospect Street)
New Haven, Connecticut 06520